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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: COGAT CLAIMS IMPROVEMENT IN AMA ISSUES, EXPRESSES  
CONCERNS OVER RAFAH

REF: A) TEL AVIV 4581 B) TEL AVIV 4465

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones: Reasons 1.4 (B and D).

1. (C) Summary: PolCouns, EconCouns, and Deputy Consul General discussed Agreement on Movement and Access issues with MG Yossef Mishlev (GOI Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories - COGAT) on December 7. Mishlev confirmed that the IDF had lifted age restrictions on travelers from Nablus and canceled the permit requirement to use the Wadi Nar checkpoint. He outlined steps to improve the operation of the Karni crossing and coordination with Sa'eb Erakat, blaming the Palestinians for delays. Mishlev claimed that Hamas has smuggled 500 million USD into Gaza through Rafah this year. Septel covers COGAT's response to USG efforts to resolve the visa problems facing AmCits in the West Bank. End summary.

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Improvements in GOI Permit Regime for Palestinians  
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2. (C) Mishlev confirmed that the IDF had dropped its age restrictions on male Palestinians seeking to travel from Nablus. The IDF is also discussing the removal of some of the checkpoints near Nablus, but this step is on hold due to intelligence concerning a suicide bomber attempting to reach Israel. According to Mishlev, the IDF has lifted the permit requirement for vehicles crossing through the Wadi Nar checkpoint (which essentially separates the northern and southern parts of the West Bank). He claimed that the GOI is working to improve Palestinian access to the Jordan Valley, although permits are still limited to workers/businesspersons, residents, and humanitarian cases/hajjis.

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GOI Blames Palestinians for Lack of Progress at Karni  
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3. (C) Mishlev outlined steps to improve the operation of the Karni crossing. A conveyor belt for construction aggregates (capable of transferring 3,000 tons an hour), changes to the agricultural export guidelines, and installation of a crane to move empty containers across the border should -- in COGAT's assessment -- free other areas of the crossing to handle the current backlog. On December 6, 59 truckloads of goods entered Israel from Gaza and 200 truckloads went in the opposite direction. 150 truckloads donated by Turkey and the World Food Program had recently crossed at Sufa as well. Mishlev's assistant claimed that U.S. exports to Gaza are not being delayed at Ashdod port, but acknowledged delays at the privately-run bonded holding areas outside the harbor.

4. (C) Both Mishlev and senior MOD adviser Haggai Alon claimed that a "fundamental problem" on the PA side prohibits greater throughput at Karni. Mishlev said he is working on the issue with Sa'eb Erakat, who reportedly told him that the

Palestinians "are not ready" to take the steps necessary for longer operations. Equipment donated by Spain to the Palestinian security forces and several automobiles listed as taxis are being blocked by the GOI for security reasons, although Mishlev added that Erakat is coordinating partial release of the goods.

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Rafah Crossing: Openings and Hamas Smuggling of Cash  
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15. (C) When asked about Rafah, Mishlev said that the GOI is in contact with Erakat and has agreed to the opening of the crossing on an intermittent basis -- he mentioned two days a week -- to facilitate travel by Gazans making the hajj and others traveling over the December Eid holiday period. He complained that the unrestricted movement of cash through Rafah by Hamas couriers works against the international community's efforts to isolate Hamas. He noted Palestinian reports that Hamas has smuggled up to 800 million USD into Gaza, although he estimated that the actual total is closer to 500 million USD.

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JONES